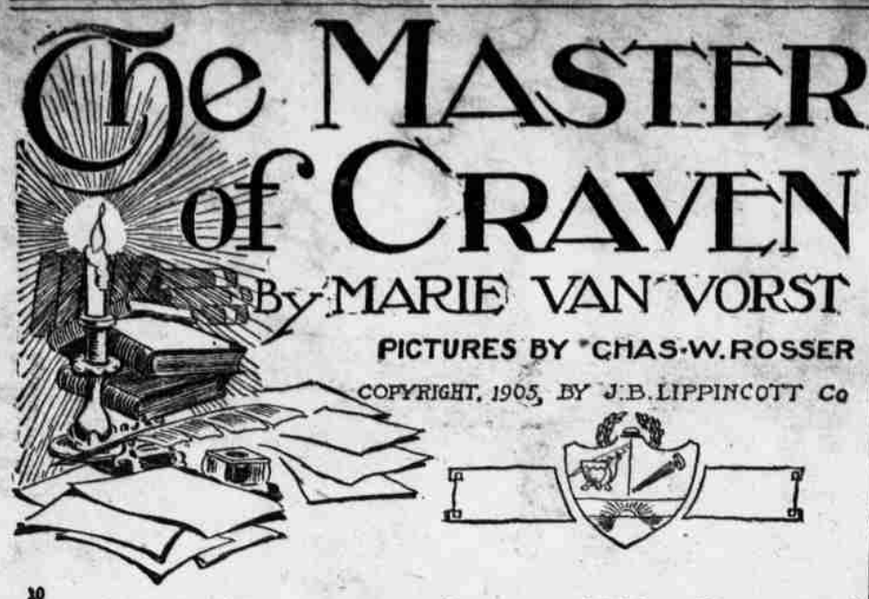
The Master of Craven

By MARIE VAN VORST

PICTURES BY CHAS. W. ROSSER



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SYNOPSIS.

Basil Tempest, world's greatest poet and novelist, refusing further to be lionized, shuts himself up in Craven, his country home. His gloomy meditations are broken by the admission of an American, Lucy Carew, who has come to England to get a study of the author, but more especially a synopsis of his new suite of poems. Tempest, angry at being disturbed, declares he will write no more, and asks Lucy to go. Repenting his rudeness in sending her out at night in the rain, Tempest hastens after her, but she refuses to return to Craven with him and takes lodging with a cottager. Next morning Lucy receives an apology from Tempest and an offer to assist her in writing her essay. Tempest dictates to Lucy, who listens spellbound as she writes. Lucy decides to go to London, but Tempest induces her to remain and read her manuscript to him. Lucy declines an invitation to dine with Tempest, who in anger and disappointment, goes to London. He asks Lady Ormond, with whom his name has been linked, to leave her husband, promising to marry her when the husband gets a divorce. She insists on the divorce first. Tempest departs for Craven. He burns Lady Ormond's picture after forcing a reluctant opinion of that lady from Lucy. The latter consents to continue the writing. Tempest burns the letters and photographs of Lady Ormond. He takes great pleasure in Lucy's presence as their work progresses. He takes her to Pentheun castle, where unexpectedly he meets Lady Ormond.

CHAPTER VI.

Tempest tortured himself with wondering whether or not Miss Carew had heard and how much; if she had heard, would it affect her, and why? That it would not be indifferent to her he was too versed in women not to mark, and he read with delight all that this clear-eyed girl revealed.

"If I could have a right to her, would I be so quick to understand her? Probably not! It is simply because she is safe from me that I am tortured by a sight of bliss I can never claim. If things had been so that we might have married I daresay I should have eaten my heart out with doubt regarding her state of mind!"

During the drive from Pentheun to Craven over miles swiftly and easily covered by the heavy-rolling motor Tempest had not been able very satisfactorily to study his companion. Excitement may have blurred his vision; he several times impatiently passed his hand across his eyes, straining to see what change had come to her face. Once he muttered something under his breath which she could not hear—it sounded like an imprecation.

With all his power of making himself delightful he filled the short hour so perfectly as to leave Miss Carew no time in which to think and puzzle and to withdraw from him. He made her conscious of herself and of him, and crowded out every possible other person from her mind.

On leaving her at Ramsdill's he said nothing whatsoever about seeing her the following day, and before it dawned he had regretted it.

During the early hours he was up at dawn pacing his bedroom; later tramping his study, his face towards the window through which he could catch the first glimpse of Miss Carew when she should appear, he searched the avenue with the eagerness of one who waits for a herald..

Over and over again he murmured: "Well, she has gone! She should have gone long ago. I am quite mad—and have I dared to dream? Letty did a good turn to the child—"

He gathered together the manuscript she had copied in a pile, on the top a sonnet he had written during the last few days. It was half after ten, a good 30 minutes beyond her hour.

"I'll give her another hour to wonder in—to be jealous in—and to make up her mind to be late in—then if she fails me, I will scatter these sheets to the wind." He steadfastly watched the unloveliness of the changed November atmosphere.

He had been right in his prediction—the phenomenal beauty of the autumn was gone, and England had settled down into the early winter gloom. In another five minutes Tempest saw her coming up the alley to the terrace steps.

She found him standing by what he called a sacrificial pile of all their work, one hand on it, one stretched out to her, and a radiant welcome on his face:

"I should have waited just one hour more," he said, "and then have destroyed this stuff, Miss Carew."

Between them there was already the embarrassment of intense personal feeling undeclared. His delight at her return was too much for her composure. She turned away with the excuse of taking off her coat and gloves, and to-day—she laid aside her hat—for the first time he saw her hair free of covering; it gave him the pleasure of thinking her at home in his room.

When he said brusquely: "I don't want to write to-day, Miss Carew," she flushed painfully.

"No? You did not perhaps expect me?"

"I never dare to expect you—I have never dared. If hope is expectation, then I do. I can't say I didn't look. I was at the window; you saw me?"

"Yes."

"Why do you gather up your gloves again?"

"If you don't care to work?"

"Oh!"—his impatience was boyish. "What a school-mistress! I have 'worked' as you call it, made you work for weeks, a methodical honest labor quite unusual even to me, and yet I have produced pas mal de choses. Can't I have one holiday?"

"We had yesterday."

"We," he laughed, delighted. "We," he emphasized, "will have this morning. Let me rest in the agreeable sense of—talking with you—an hour or two." Other words, whose warmth colored even the simple phrase he used, were at his tongue's end.

Miss Carew sat down before her table and her materials and folded her hands over them.

"I have asked you nothing, Miss Carew, during these faithful weeks. I mean about yourself. You must have sometimes thought me selfish?"

"No."

"I am," he confessed, "horribly selfish, but that is not the reason—I have not wished to know. You came to me like a dream as it might be, like a fairy godmother out of an old tale on one windy night in the storm—against my will. How rude I was! But you forgave me!" He had drawn near to her. "I like to think of you so—you seemed to have a wand with you, you know; you touched the bewitched fancies in my brain and things came to life again."

Tempest was under a control whose strength only a man of his nearly ungovernable passions knows how to use.

"I've an idea there are no fairy stories in America—at any rate, I don't connect you with anything 3,000 miles away. You said something about careers and working for your living—"

Here he stopped. Her slender hands, her slender figure, the grace and femininity of her, coming in contrast with the harsh facts he broached appeared to distress him. "I can't think of money, or the lack of it, in connection with you. I can't believe you are poor, you don't look it."

"Don't think it, please, Mr. Tempest, nor about it. Let me write now, or go."

The presence of Lucy Carew to-day was so grateful to him, her coming so far more than he had let himself hope, his relief that she had not heard the tirade at Penthuen, that he could not forego the pleasure it was to move her, to see her eyes glow, to watch her fluttering lids, to mark the evidences of an agitation of which he knew the cause by reason of his own pulse. But he was determined to say nothing to alienate or terrify her, to force a retreat he knew she would do well to make—nothing that should spoil relations far too precious to him to renounce.

"I like to think so of you—that you just appeared—got out of a pumpkin chariot at my door! You said something about America, but—"

He was struggling with himself. Since he must not say to her what he wished, what he longed to say, anything else would be an insult.

She had taken up her pen, and he let her write for a time, dictating a few pages for re-copy, then threw them impatiently down.

"If you will let me, I will walk to the Ford with you. We must start now, or you will be very late for Mrs. Ramsdill's."

At a little lane well on towards the town where he parted with her he said:

"As long as you live you will never know what you have done for me, and I can't ever tell you—only won't you understand, since such is the fact—that I can't endure to think you have hardships to bear?" His tone and the strange phrase chilled her. Did he mean this as a good-by, a dismissal? She grew cold and pale.

They were quite by themselves in the little lane, Craven behind them and the Ford just at the turn. Tempest took her passive hands to him and pressed them against his breast.

Then, with the gesture she had remarked before, he threw them from his and left her standing there, without another word, alone.

On his return to the house he went straight to Mrs. Henly's little housekeeping room—a cosey, comfortable, homely corner in a wing by itself, had intended joining the nautical man's ship some day, just as he had intended doing at some period everything that amused him or stimulated his live fancy. In the big armchair with its print-covered back and arms Mrs. Henly had held him and soothed his griefs. His own little chair stood by the fireplace as it had for more than thirty years. He had been a sailor in it; it had been a boat, a chariot, a ship of dreams. To the quaint room with its individual odors (Tempest had always thought of wools and worsteds, and fire and fogs and tea!) he had come stormily with his miseries of boy-loce, which he had confided on Mrs. Henly's breast; here, stormily, later, with the miseries of man's love, he had not confided. But never had he gone away without some solace from the homely little room. To-day he came in and shut the door. Mrs. Henly sat knitting in her big chair.

"She's old," he thought for the first "She's aged very much of late, but she'll stand by me till—the end." Then aloud: "Sit still, Henly; don't get up," and Tempest took the corner of the table and sat himself down on it, staring at her.

He was past 40 years old, but only she would have known it. There was no gray in the thick, dark hair that grew close as thatch around his beautiful head. Bodily and mentally he was so vibrant, so magnetic, so strong, that youth seemed inherent in him, and he would never be old. To her, indeed, he had never grown up His naturally uncontrolled nature made him often like a naughty child. and when he was his more lovable self she called him to her heart "my dear, dear boy." As she said, she had wept tears already so bitter that she would not claim a nearer tie if it could have added salt to their brine Her master said shortly:

"Henly, she must go."

Mrs. Henly knitted a line in order to collect herself, then put her work down on the table and looked at her master over her glasses. ("He speaks of her as if she were the housemaid,' she thought.)

"I'm heart sorry, Mr. Basil."

"Why," he demanded, rudely "why?"

"She's a sweet and gentle lady, coming as she does, clinging to the door as I might say; here as she is, day in and out, no one could or does think harm of her."

He exclaimed furiously:

"Harm! how do you dare, Henly to mean—"

"I mean," said the housekeeper, steadily, "that for a young lady alone here—with no mother or friend even—even the Ford would talk; but she bears it in her face what she is—good and true."

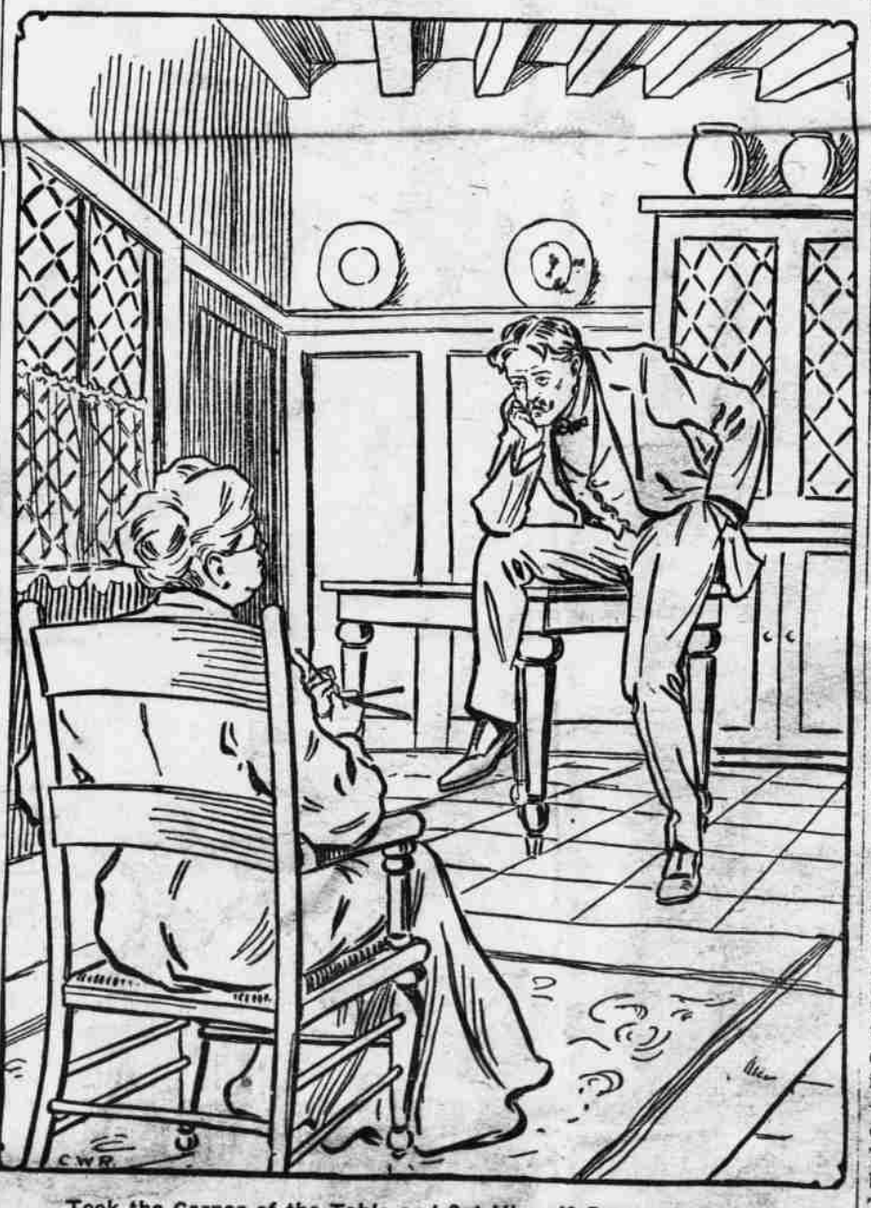
"Yes," he interrupted more reasonably, "she does, and good she shall remain. That's why she must go. She must leave Cravenford; no good will come to her for staying on."

"But," interrupted the devoted woman, "to you, Mr. Basil?"

Tempest was forced to smile.

"You would sacrifice anything to that, I think. Yop have kept silent and patient, never considering her so far, or her reputation, because you thought it was good for me!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



Took the Corner of the Table and Sat Himself Down on It.

Food for Reminiscence.

Twenty-five years hence the Pennsylvania railroad station will give a lot of people a chance to reminisce," said the grayheaded New Yorker. "'I was born on the site of the Pennsylvania station,' they can tell their acquaintances, and then proceed to give an account of their vicissitudes during the trying time of eviction to make way for the great improvement.

"That introduction, 'I was born on the site of such and such a building,' is a favorite reminiscence with many men. Even the new buildings afford considerable satisfaction to the fellow who likes to hark back to his birthplace. Why, I heard a man boast the other day that he was born where the Hippodrome now stands. Hotels, churches, theaters, offices—any building to which present interest attaches—are a scaffolding to which men born on that site may tack their stories. The larger and more important the building, the more boastful the tone. That being the case, the possibilities of the Pennsylvania station as a future topic of conversation are immeasurable."

Sanctum Confidences.

"Brooks," said Rivers, "can you give me a synonym for 'utility?' I've used that word twice already."

"I suppose I can," growled Brooks, "but what's the use?"

"Use? Use? Thanks; that'll do."

Thereupon the rattle of the typewriter began again.

An Opportunity.

Judge—"Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth?" Fair Witness— It will be just perfectly lovely if you really have the time to listen —Harper's Bazar.

So It Is.

"I see where Boston observed 'Apple day.'"

"When is 'Bean day' in Boston?"

"Oh, every day is bean day in Boston."

An Efficient Mistress.

Mrs. A., who had a shiftless colored maid, was hurrying through her morning's work in order to go out with a friend in the afternoon. As she flew about from room to room she heard the colored woman chuckling to herself as if very much enjoying something. Impatiently she said:

"What in the world is it that amuses you so, Isabel?"

"Well, Mis' Bessie, when I heard you gallopin' aroun' upstairs I jes' t'ought if you'd been de Lawd it wouldn't 'a' took you no six days to make de hebbens an' de yearth!"—S. A. Rice, in Woman's Home Companion.

Vindictive Cuss.

"Ugh!" spluttered Mr. Jones. "That nut had a worm in it."

"Here," urged a friend, offering him a glass of water, "drink this and wash it down."

"Wash it down!" growled Jones. "Why should I? Let him walk!"—Everybody's.